

WATER SUPPLY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction



Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (12.29 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002, the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 for particular purposes, to repeal the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act 1909, and to make minor and consequential amendments to the acts mentioned in schedule 1. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.

Tabled paper: Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, explanatory notes.

It is my pleasure to introduce the Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 which will transform and reduce the regulatory burden for Queensland's water sector and streamline water and sewerage connection approvals for the South-East Queensland distributor-retailers. In line with the goals of the working draft of the Queensland Plan, the bill moves the focus of water industry regulation from process to outcomes.

Queensland communities and businesses cannot operate and continue to grow without essential services like water and sewerage. Queensland has around 86 providers—most of which are local governments—delivering drinking water and sewerage services to communities. About another 80 providers deliver non-drinking water to customers operating mostly in the agricultural and mining sectors.

Through this bill the onus on water and sewerage service providers will shift from the preparation of detailed management plans to regular public reporting. This will promote business monitoring, drive continual improvement and increase accountability to customers. The new framework answers water industry calls over many years to simplify and improve how they are regulated.

Reduced regulatory burden will be achieved by removing the requirement for service providers to submit four prescriptive management plans. This requirement will be replaced with annual reporting by providers on their performance. Additionally, my department will publish a comparative report on industry performance so that customers can see how their services measure up and to provide incentive for providers to improve.

Increased transparency and accountability for customers is a key component of the bill. If there is evidence of risks to water security or continuity of the service supply, including sewerage services, a service provider will be required to develop and implement an improvement plan.

In line with these reforms, the bill will simplify the regulation of recycled water provision. Schemes that supply recycled water for lower exposure uses, such as irrigation of parks, will no longer need an approved recycled water management plan or exemption. However, all schemes, with the exception of schemes that supply coal seam gas water, will need to be registered so the regulators—my department and the Department of Health—have a record of recycled water use across Queensland. The changes to the regulation of recycled water provision are a move towards a better, risk based framework where the level of regulation reflects risk.

The bill streamlines the appeal provisions of the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 to direct all appealable dam safety decisions to the Planning and Environment Court.

The bill amends the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 to clarify that authorised persons can be appointed by a service provider to install water meters on the service provider's infrastructure, in addition to licensed plumbers. These authorised persons will need to have appropriate training or expertise and must be competent to undertake the work safely and mitigate risks to public health. This amendment will save time and money for service providers and developers. However, the installation of sub-meters in premises will remain work that must only be done by a licensed plumber.

The bill will result in a number of operational improvements for water businesses that have been requested by the industry. Firstly, it removes the requirement in the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 for service providers to provide residential tenants with water consumption advice.

Secondly, it amends the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009 to improve operations for distributor-retailers by removing the requirement to publish draft prices outside their usual budget cycle and by allowing each council to have a councillor on a distributor-retailer's board. The bill also amends the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009 to provide a streamlined water and sewerage connection approval process for South-East Queensland distributor-retailers referred to as the utility model.

It merges two current approvals under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and creates a single approval for connecting premises to water and sewerage services. Distributor-retailers will directly consider and approve water and sewerage connection applications resulting in a quicker, simplified and cost-effective approval mechanism for customers of distributor-retailers.

Water and sewerage connection approvals have been customised for all scales of development from a new house to a large scale subdivision. The bill allows for the swift approval of standard connection applications for developments such as new houses to be determined within five business days. It also allows for non-standard connections for more complicated connections and for staged water connection approvals for large staged developments. Accredited third parties can deal with aspects of the more complicated applications, such as certification of infrastructure works, resulting in a reduction in design times and holding times for developers, as well as time consuming delays. This simplified approval process aligns with the government's planning reforms and supports infrastructure and economic development within South-East Queensland.

Finally, the bill repeals the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Act 1909 which has been superseded by more contemporary legislation and is now redundant. This act established and governed the operations of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board until it was disestablished in 1928 and the board's powers were assigned to Brisbane City Council.

As a package, these measures address industry calls for regulatory simplification while driving improvement and flexibility. The proposals support the goals in the draft Queensland Plan to improve planning and infrastructure management and to shift the focus of governance from process to outcomes.

The bill also supports the Queensland government's commitment to cut red tape and regulation by 20 per cent and the reforms will deliver cost savings to the water industry. The Department of Energy and Water Supply is coordinating the development of a 30-year water strategy which will further address the regulatory environment and organisational challenges facing Queensland's water sector. Through addressing industry calls for regulatory simplification while driving improvement and flexibility, the Water Supply Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 represents a real step forward and is a basis for further reform under the 30-year strategy. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. MF McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (12.36 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.


Bill read a first time.

Referral to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee.

~~CHICKEN MEAT INDUSTRY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~Introduction~~

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (12.36 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Chicken Meat Industry Committee Act 1976 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee to consider the bill.